

United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- + Secretary-General recommends that Security Council extend UNAMIR mandate for six months, saying humanitarian disaster and violence in Rwanda require urgent action; accuses international community of failing to respond to genocide.
- + Rwandan Government and RPF hold second round of cease-fire talks under aegis of UNAMIR; exchanges of civilians trapped behind confrontation lines to resume tomorrow.
- + IAEA says it is now impossible to determine if Democratic People's Republic of Korea has diverted nuclear material because of discharge operations at five megawatt reactor.
- + Secretary-General expresses concern at reported Israeli air attack in Lebanon, and at subsequent rocket attack on northern Israel.
- + Special Representative Akashi postpones Bosnian peace talks in Geneva because of Bosnian Serb military presence in Gorazde exclusion zone.
- + Secretary-General appoints Lakhdar Brahimi as Special Envoy for Yemen and head of upcoming fact-finding mission to area.
- + Special Representative Akashi authorizes use of NATO close air support after shelling of UNPROFOR base in Bosnia and Herzegovina yesterday; authorization withdrawn after firing ceases.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) be extended for six months, saying the humanitarian disaster and violence there require urgent and decisive action. In a report to the Security Council dated 31 May, he said further extensions would be needed. While the Rwandan parties had begun cease-fire talks, national reconciliation would not come easily, and the Organization had a duty to help however it could. He said he would establish a trust fund for Rwanda and appealed for generous contributions to it.

The Secretary-General said the massacres in Rwanda constituted genocide, because the victims belonged to a particular ethnic group. The international community's reaction demonstrated "its extreme inadequacy to respond urgently with prompt and decisive action to humanitarian crises entwined with armed conflict", he continued. UNAMIR's presence on the ground had been reduced when the carnage started; now the international community appeared "paralysed" in reacting to the Mission's revised mandate. "We all must recognize that...we have failed in our response to the agony of Rwanda, and thus have acquiesced in the continued loss of lives", he stressed. The crisis revealed the absence of a collective political will, and the entire system had to be reviewed to strengthen its reactive capacity.

The Secretary-General urged the Rwandan parties to end the killing immediately, citing evidence that the overwhelming responsibility lay with the "interim Government" and the Rwandan Government forces. An end to the killings must be concomitant with a cease-fire, and UNAMIR would make every effort to facilitate the talks underway. The Mission's immediate priority was to relieve the suffering of the displaced population and the fears of civilians under threat. However, humanitarian operations required adequate security conditions, and Member States must give UNAMIR the resources necessary to implement its mandate.

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The Government of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) today held a second round of cease-fire talks under the aegis of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR). The parties discussed the issue of civilians trapped behind the lines of confrontation, and agreed that exchanges should resume tomorrow. They also agreed to continue the talks at a later date, according to a United Nations spokesman.

Meanwhile, officials from the Department of Peace-keeping Operations met yesterday at Headquarters with United States officials for discussions regarding UNAMIR. They reached an agreement on the leasing of 50 armoured personnel carriers for use by the Mission, and the vehicles could be delivered within weeks, the spokesman said.

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The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) today said that it was now impossible to determine whether the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had diverted fuel from its five megawatt nuclear reactor as a result of discharge operations there. The Agency noted that it was reporting that conclusion to the Security Council, and that its Director-General, Hans Blix, would brief an informal meeting of the Council shortly.

In a Presidential statement on Monday, the Council strongly urged the People's Republic "only to proceed with the discharge operations at the five megawatt reactor in a manner which preserves the technical possibility of fuel measurements, in accordance with the IAEA's requirements in this regard".

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has expressed deep concern at reports of an Israeli air attack near Ba'albek, Lebanon, this morning, according to a United Nations spokesman. Dozens of people were said to have been killed in the attack and scores wounded.

The Secretary-General said he regretted the escalation of violence at a sensitive time in the Middle East. He also expressed concern at reports that rockets had been fired into northern Israel later in the morning.

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Special Representative Yasushi Akashi today postponed talks in Geneva aimed at achieving a cease-fire in Bosnia and Herzegovina because Bosnian Serb forces had not withdrawn from the 3-kilometre exclusion zone around Gorazde, according to a United Nations spokesman. Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic had assured Mr. Akashi yesterday that all armed elements would be withdrawn from the zone. The spokesman did not exclude the possibility that "something could develop tomorrow," noting that the talks had been scheduled to last two days.

The talks were to have built on Mr. Akashi's initiative of 21 May, in which he put forward a framework for an immediate end to the fighting. That framework included provisions for the positioning of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) between the warring parties, freedom of movement for UNPROFOR and humanitarian agencies, and the release of all prisoners of war.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has appointed Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi as his Special Envoy for Yemen and head of the forthcoming fact-finding mission to the area. The Security Council, in resolution 924 (1994), yesterday asked the Secretary-General to dispatch the mission as soon as practicable to assess the prospects for a renewed dialogue on ending the conflict in Yemen. It also asked him to report on the situation not later than one week after the completion of the mission.

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Special Representative Yasushi Akashi yesterday authorized the use of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) close air support in defence of United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) personnel who had come under fire in south-west Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mr. Akashi took that action after eight shells landed around a British Army base in Bugojno; he said close air support could be used on condition that the weapons in question were in the process of firing, or had been observed firing, near, or on, the base.

Meanwhile, at Mr. Akashi's direction, the Acting Commander of UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina contacted the Chief of Staff of the Bosnian Serb Army, and received an assurance that no more shells would be fired near, or on, the British base. No further shelling was reported in Bugojno, and the UNPROFOR Force Commander subsequently withdrew authority to use air support.

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